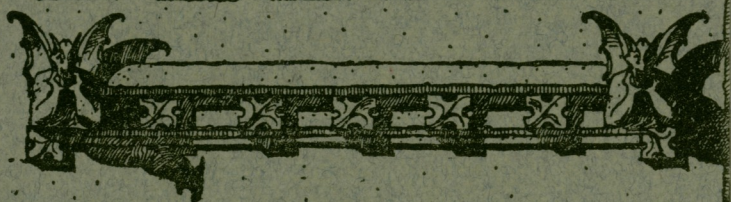


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CATALOGUE OF AN EXHIBITION

EAUX-FORTES

sur

PARIS

par

C. MERYON.



FREDERICK KEPPEL & CO.



1909

NO 4 EAST 39<sup>th</sup> STREET • NEW YORK





CATALOGUE OF  
AN EXHIBITION OF  
ETCHINGS OF PARIS  
BY  
MERYON

FREDERICK KEPPEL & CO.

4 EAST 39TH STREET

NEW YORK

FEBRUARY 5 TO MARCH 2, 1909.

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PARIS has inspired many artists in art and in literature, but it may be questioned whether she ever inspired anything quite so noble and beautiful as the etched work of Meryon. It is curious, too, that this work, the most somber record that ever was made upon any city, should have been made upon Paris—associated in our minds with such different impressions.

20709 gift of F. Keppele 120

Through his genius it was possible for him to express the deep tragical beauty of his visions of the city in a style strangely simple, distinct, and finished to serve as a vehicle for such ideas. One would have fancied that, to express such thoughts, a vague, mysterious style would have been necessary.

Again, the wonderful unity of his compositions does not suffer in the slightest from the fact that the details along the edges and in the corners of the plate are as carefully drawn as the objects in the focus of the picture. In daring to do this Meryon stands almost alone among the masters of etching.

His great work was produced in four short years — and only four years before that wonderful mind became overbalanced by the force of its own genius. This makes his great period seem like a beautiful but sinister flaring up of the fire of his life, just before its extinction.

In February, 1868, Meryon died of hunger at the Asylum of Charenton.

DAVID KEPPEL.

February, 1909.

## BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

CHARLES MERYON was born in Paris on the 23d of November, 1821. He was the natural son of Charles Lewis Meryon, a London physician, and Narcisse Chaspoux, a ballet-dancer at the Opéra. Deserted by his father, Meryon was brought up by his mother, from whom he inherited his artistic nature. In 1837 he entered the French navy, but left it in 1846 and established himself in Paris for the study of art. The career of a painter being closed against him by reason of his color-blindness, he entered the atelier of Eugène Bléry, whose pupil he became for six months, and after that began the series of etchings—his “Eaux fortes sur Paris”—with which his name will remain forever associated. Early in 1858 the mental disease by which he had been long threatened developed itself, and a few months later he was placed in the asylum at Charenton—“suffering from melancholy madness, aggravated by delusions.” In 1859 he left the asylum and for seven years worked on, leading a curiously fitful life with the few whom he called his friends, but in 1866 his malady increased and he was confined in the asylum for a second time. Meryon died February 14, 1868, and his body was laid in the cemetery of Charenton-Saint-Maurice.



# CATALOGUE

1 **Eaux-fortes-sur-Paris.** (Wedmore No. 1)

"The cover for the Paris Set. It bears the title on a representation of a slab of stone, which is doubtless symbolical of the building of Old Paris. And it is here by a happy coincidence at the head of a work which the artist himself has built rather than drawn."

Frederick Wedmore, *Meryon and Meryon's Paris*, p. 41.

2 **Old Gate of the Palace of Justice.** (Wedmore No. 3)

Second state.

On gray India paper.

3 **The Same.**

Another impression, on Whatman paper.

4 **Arms of the City of Paris.** (Wedmore No. 5)

Impression on warm-toned, yellow, Japanese paper.

5 **Le Stryge.** (Wedmore No. 7)

First state of four. Before the verses were erased. On *papier verdâtre*. From the collection of Henri le Sec des Tournelles.

This impression bears the dedication, in Meryon's handwriting,

"à Monsieur Cranis  
son ami

C. Meryon."

"—above these scenes, these and many others so depicted, there broods with satisfaction Meryon's *Stryge*—the horned and winged demon, an incarnation of all evil and disastrous things, which the Gothic imagination set among the carved stones of Notre Dame, and which the genius of Meryon understood and interpreted, as it looked down from its lonely heights upon the life of the city. Here and elsewhere Meryon recorded strange things, terrible things, beautiful things, but never his sense of this or that object—building, church, or bridge—for its own sake alone. He recorded in them his imagination of Paris—his sense of various fortunes and many lives. He did this with the truth of fact, and the truth of poetic fiction."

Frederick Wedmore, *Meryon and Meryon's Paris*, pp. 27-28.

## 6 The Same.

Another impression of the first state, also on *papier verdâtre* and somewhat more richly printed.

From the collection of Sir Seymour Haden, who has written his initials on the back of the print.

"In the winter of 1861-62," says Monsieur Andrieu, "Madame Max Valrey introduced me to Meryon. Taking up the etching, which did not then bear the name of *Le Stryge*, Meryon said to me, 'You can't tell why my comrades, who know their work better than I do, fail with the Tower of St. Jacques? It is because the modern square is the principal thing for them and the Middle Age tower an accident. But if they saw, as I see, an enemy behind each battlement and arms through each loophole; if they expected, as I do, to have the boiling oil and the molten lead poured down on them, they would do far finer things than I can do. For often I have to patch my plate so much that I ought indeed to be a tinker. My comrades,' added he,—striking the *Stryge*,—'my comrades are sensible fellows. They are never haunted by this monster.' 'What monster?' I asked, and seeing a reproachful look, I corrected myself, 'Or rather, what does this monster mean?' 'The monster is mine and that of the men who built the Tower of St. Jacques. He means stupidity, cruelty, lust, hypocrisy—they have all met in that one beast.'"

Frederick Wedmore, *Meryon and Meryon's Paris*, p. 45.

## 7 The Same.

Impression in brownish ink on Whatman paper.

## 8 Le Petit Pont.

(Wedmore No. 8)

Second state of five.

On *papier verdâtre*.

This should really be considered the first state, as the few existing impressions before the "C.M." in the upper right-hand corner are really only experimental trial proofs.

This impression is from the collection of Monsieur Jules Niel and bears the seal of the Ministère de l'Intérieur stamped "blind" in the margin.

Monsieur Niel was one of the first to discern that Meryon was a man of genius. Niel was librarian of the Ministère de l'Intérieur in Paris. Meryon undertook the education in etching of Mademoiselle Niel, the daughter, and she became a very good etcher of architectural subjects; but she had to break with him because, during a cold winter, he insisted that she must take a daily bath in the icy waters of the river Seine. This was one of the symptoms of Meryon's approaching insanity.

"These last two above all" (the *Rue Pirouette* and the *Rue des Chantres*) "are still beautiful plates, but they are far from having, whatever may be claimed for them, the splendid austerity, the admirable balance, of the *Petit Pont*, the *Morgue*, the *Galerie de Notre Dame*, or the *Abside*."

Loys Delteil, *Charles Meryon*.

## 9 The Same.

An impression in the same state as the preceding on grayish Japanese paper.

"But Meryon's skies were not the skies of open country; no



vast spaces of unbroken air, of light uncrossed by shadows, but mostly fragments of sky seen from between towering street-lines—the gray, obscured, and lower sky of cities; now and again, as in the *Abside*, larger tracts, here charged with brooding clouds, with birds flying low—the ‘solemn admonishing skies’ of a mind constant to its own imaginations.”

Wedmore, *Meryon and Meryon's Paris*, p. 30.

#### 10 The Same.

Another impression, on warm-toned brownish Japanese paper. These impressions on Japanese paper were, as a rule, earlier than the *verdâtre*.

#### 11 The Same.

Another impression, in brownish ink on Whatman paper.

“In his etchings of Paris the very stones seemed to breathe. ‘Paris is not a town,’ said D’Herisson, years ago. ‘It is a living being, with moments of fury, folly, stupidity, enthusiasm, honesty, purity.’”

Hugh Stokes, *Charles Meryon*, p. 23.

#### 12 L’Arche du Pont Notre Dame.

(Wedmore No. 9)

First state of three.

On *papier verdâtre*.

From the Philippe Burty and Ellingwood collections.

“Under the arch of *Le Pont Notre Dame*, a woman’s figure, standing, brooding nobly, is set well against the weird activity of the lithe figure slung in the rope.”

Wedmore, *Meryon and Meryon's Paris*, p. 31.

#### 13 The Same.

The first state of three.

On *papier verdâtre*.

“But indeed his distant skies are often of marvelous poetry, and the atmosphere between us and those furthest skies is of singular fidelity.”

Wedmore, *Meryon and Meryon's Paris*, p. 31.

#### 14 The Same.

Another impression of the first state, on *papier verdâtre*.

From the collection of Sir Seymour Haden. Sir Seymour has written his initials in the corner of the print.

#### 15 The Same.

Another impression, on gray India paper.

#### 16 The Same.

Another impression, printed in brownish ink on white *vergé* paper.

#### 17 La Galerie de Notre Dame.

(Wedmore No. 10)

The first state of three, on *papier verdâtre*.

“His finest work, for quality of reflected light, is the *Galerie de Notre Dame*.”

Philippe Burty, *Charles Meryon*, p. 12.

(See also the note under *Le Petit Pont*, No. 8.)

## 18 The Same.

Another impression, also in the first state, on *papier verdâtre*.

"Art for him, was a fetish, an idol one was not to touch. There were no artists; art was too difficult. He himself was of no account. You could not tell him that his work was good, or that he had talent; it was not possible to praise him in his presence. To do so was to make yourself his enemy.

"One might aspire toward art and desire it. But that was all!"

*Extract from a letter of Dr. Gachet.*

## 19 The Same.

First state, on gray India paper.

This impression is a good illustration of the peculiar beauty which these impressions on gray India paper often possess.

## 20 La Rue des Mauvais Garçons. (Wedmore No. 11)

Second state, printed in *bistre* ink on *vergé* paper.

"The one lyric note of the *Rue des Mauvais Garçons*, for instance, is in its own way as complete a thing as is the magnificent epic of *Abside* or *Morgue*."

Frederick Wedmore, *Fine Prints*, p. 72.

"The *Rue des Mauvais Garçons*, with its gaunt house lines, its barred windows, its darkly shadowed portal, and deserted ways—its narrow pavement, along which two lonely figures hurry, and 'gather garments round them, pass, nor pry'—has its companion in the *Morgue*. . . ."

Frederick Wedmore, *Meryon and Meryon's Paris*, p. 26.

*The verses at the top of the plate may be translated as follows:*

"What mortal inhabits this dismal abode? Who is it that lurks there in night and in darkness? Is it a virtuous one, poor and uncomplaining; or crime—would you say? Some vicious soul? Ah! truly, I don't know; if you wish to find out, inquisitive one, go seek. You still have time to do it."

## 21 La Tour de l'Horloge. (Wedmore No. 12)

First state of four, on *papier verdâtre*.

From the Philippe Burty, Dowdeswell, and Ellingwood collections.

"*La Tour de l'Horloge*, a magnificent piece of drawing, was perfect as a composition until he broke it up with long shafts of streaming light." (These beams first appeared in the third state.)

Hugh Stokes, *Charles Meryon*, p. 23.

## 22 The Same.

Another impression of the first state, on gray India paper.

"But the beginning and the end of his art, so far as the world can be asked to be seriously concerned with it, lay in the imaginative record, now faithfully simple, now transfigured and nobly visionary, of the city which requited him but ill for his devotion to its most poetic and its most prosaic features."

Frederick Wedmore, *Fine Prints*, pp. 70-71.

## 23 The Same.

Another impression of the first state, on warm-toned yellow Japanese paper.



24 The Same.

Impression in black ink on white *vergé* paper.

From the collection of Miss Mary Jane Morgan.

25 The Same.

Another impression, in the first state, on yellowish *vergé* paper in *bistre* ink.

26 Tourelle, Rue de la Tixeranderie. (Wedmore No. 13)

First state of two, on *papier verdâtre*.

This impression, like *Le Petit Pont* (No. 8), was given by Meryon to Monsieur Jules Niel. The seal of the Ministère l'Intérieur is stamped "blind" in the margin of the print, and the impression mounted on officially stamped paper.

"Lastly, the figures of Meryon. Here, as nowhere else, reality and fantasy were allowed to join. . . . But they are always interesting, fascinating, and alive, always in strange accord with the dominant note of the subject, whether they are found in grace of quietness or energy of action. Thus the tall and tranquil elegance of the standing figure in the *Abside*, almost sculptural in the simplicity of its grace, like that of the figure leaning against the doorway in the *Rue de la Tixeranderie*, fits the sentiment no less than it suits the composition, and is Meryon's and no other's."

Frederick Wedmore, *Meryon and Meryon's Paris*, p. 31.

27 The Same.

Another impression of the first state, on *papier verdâtre*.

From the collection of Atherton Curtis.

28 The Same.

The first state, printed on gray India paper.

29 The Same.

The first state, printed on warm yellowish Japanese paper.

"Considered psychologically, the work of Meryon is highly curious. It is thoughtful, reflecting, intensely personal, and full of strange hints of a passionate fantasy, secret and subdued." P. G. Hamerton, *Etching and Etchers*, p. 172.

30 The Same.

Impression in *bistre* ink on *vergé* paper.

31 St. Etienne-du-Mont.

(Wedmore No. 14)

The first state of five, on *papier verdâtre*.

"The *St. Etienne-du-Mont* is one of those etchings which possess the abiding charm of perfect things. In it a subject entirely beautiful and dignified is treated with force and with refinement of spirit, and with faultless exactitude of hand. It shows—nothing can better show—the characteristic of Meryon, the union of the courage of realism and the sentiment of poetry." Frederick Wedmore, *Fine Prints*, p. 76.

32 The Same.

Another impression of the first state, printed on white *vergé* paper.

33 La Pompe Notre Dame.

(Wedmore No. 15)

Very early trial proof, before the first state. The water extends down to the lower edge of the plate and the net which the men in the boat are just raising is without any shading.

From the Ellingwood collection.

"But he had not only the sense of the picturesque and the characteristic; he had the sense of construction. Take the *Pompe*—the engine-house by the river—and its scaffolding, beam crossed by beam. Here his pleasure in constructive work, however humble, is shown by his close and careful following of the woodwork to its darkest and furthest recesses. His fame would be assured if it rested only on the rendering of the labour of men's hands, from the fretted roof of the cathedral and its stately towers to the intricate timbers of the engine-house."

Frederick Wedmore, *Meryon and Meryon's Paris*, p. 28.

34 The Same.

The first state of four, on *papier verdâtre*.

Given by Meryon to Monsieur Jules Niel and bearing the seal of the Ministère de l'Intérieur.

The lines representing the water have been cleared from the extreme foreground, leaving a lower margin of about a quarter of an inch. The net has been shaded with delicate dry-point.

"His remarkable precision of hand, and his usually wise moderation in light and shade, have never been better exemplified. Take, for example, the exquisitely gentle curvature of the three main lines of the tower, and the entire absence of exaggerated blackness throughout the whole plate. Many of the wall surfaces are in the shade, but it is shade illuminated by reflection. The intricate arrangement of the mass of carpentry is expressed with evident enjoyment and a strong sense of construction."

P. G. Hamerton, *Etching and Etchers*, p. 174.

35 The Same.

Another impression, also in the first state, on *papier verdâtre*, somewhat more richly printed.

From the Knowles and Dowdeswell collections.

36 The Same.

Another impression, also in the first state, on warm yellowish Japanese paper.

Impressions of this plate on Japanese paper are extremely rare and give a very beautiful, sunny effect.

37 Le Pont Neuf.

(Wedmore No. 17)

Trial proof before the first state, on *papier verdâtre*. This impression is before the verses in the lower margin and this trial state may be distinguished



from the state after the verses were erased by the mark of the vise which was used to hold the plate. This mark naturally was lost when the verses were erased.

"Early proofs show Meryon quite at his best. . . ." "They (the turrets) are in full sunshine, while all the rest of the plate is either in subdued middle tint or somber depths of shade. From the impenetrable gloom under the mass of arches to the aerial delicacy of the distant street there is the widest range of executive resources; but whatever has been done in massive arch or flowing water, or among storied-houses, or clouded space of sky, has been done always in honor of these two turrets on the bridge. Even the third turret, that nearest us, has been sacrificed to them and cast into intentional shade; and when Meryon comes to the rounding of the far projecting cornice, where the gleam of sunshine falls, he follows every reflection with an indescribable pleasure and care." P. G. Hamerton, *Etching and Etchers*, p. 176.

### 38 The Same.

Another impression, also on *papier verdâtre* and in the same early state as the preceding. Somewhat more richly printed.

### 39 The Same.

Impression of the first state (with the verses) on *papier verdâtre*. This proof bears the following inscription in Meryon's handwriting:

"à Monsieur P. Landry,  
son tout dévoué,  
C. Meryon."

"No work ever done in the world has been more absolutely honest, more free from executive affectation, or pride of method. He had great subtlety and delicacy of observation, and a perception of truth so clear that it is strange how such bright insight can be compatible with any cloud or malady of the mind. His work was sanity itself, for its perfect and equal acceptance of various facts, by its patience and steadiness and study, by its caution and moderation in manner."

P. G. Hamerton, *Etching and Etchers*, p. 171.

### 40 The Same.

Another impression, but after the verses were effaced from the plate. In black ink on white *vergé* paper.

### 41 Le Pont au Change.

(Wedmore No. 18)

The first state of four.

On thin, wiry Dutch paper. Impressions of this plate and of the *Abside de Notre Dame* on *papier verdâtre* are practically unknown.

"The most beautiful in effect of sky is the *Pont au Change*."

Philippe Burty, *Charles Meryon*, p. 12.

### 42 The Same.

Another impression, also in the first state, on warm-toned Whatman paper.

"The *Pont au Change*—both the large original etching and the exquisite interpretation of Nicolle's old design—the *Pont*

*Neuf*, the great *Abside* itself with its foreground of Seine stream, will show us that no one like Meryon has depicted running water, now shallow, now deep, never mirror-like, never gathered into waves, but rippling pleasantly against the angles of the bridge piers, or flowing moody and sullen under its darkest arches; now in happy sunlight; now in profound and blackened shadow."

Frederick Wedmore, *Meryon and Meryon's Paris*, p. 29.

43 The Same.

Another impression in *bistre* ink, on Whatman paper.

44 The Same.

Also printed in *bistre* ink, on Whatman paper, but considerably more clearly printed, giving a very bright, sunny effect.

45 The Same.

The second state of four.

"Meryon was infected, even thus early, with the idea that, at the close of day, eagles and other birds of prey were let loose from the Tuileries, whose threatening flight carried trouble into the peaceful minds of the citizens, and recalled to them the triumph of the *coup d'état* of 1851."

Philippe Burty, *Charles Meryon*, p. 66.

46 The Morgue.

(Wedmore No. 20)

First state, before any letters.

Kindly lent for the exhibition.

47 The Same.

Second state.

On *papier verdâtre*.

Kindly lent for the exhibition.

48 The Same.

Second state of five.

On thin, wiry Dutch paper.

Kindly lent for the exhibition.

"The *Morgue*, where, before the tender and delicate lines of the Doric building now destroyed, and before the many-storied houses with windows indifferent or watchful, the weird figures of Meryon's pencil gaze idly or rush with terror; here, a cruel crowd assembled heartless, the unmoved witnesses of the terrible arrival; there one woman in the agony of dread or discovery, knowing or surmising whose is the body borne with dropped and heavy head, with wet limbs, from the river."

Frederick Wedmore, *Meryon and Meryon's Paris*, p. 27.

49 The Same.

Another impression, in the same state, somewhat more richly printed.

On old Holland paper.

Kindly lent for the exhibition.



50 The Same.

The third state of five.

Printed on thin Japanese paper.

51 The Same.

Another impression, on the back of which is printed an impression of Meryon's plate, "*King Louis Receiving a Printer.*"

52 L'Abside de Notre Dame de Paris. (Wedmore No. 22.)

The second state of five.

Printed in rich *bistre* ink on thin, wiry, old Dutch paper. One of the finest impressions in existence.

In the case of this plate, as in *Le Petit Pont*, this state should be considered the first, there having been only about six or eight impressions previous to it.

Kindly lent for the exhibition.

"The *Abside* is accounted the masterpiece of Meryon: by right of its peculiarly majestic composition and of its solemn and austere beauty."

Frederick Wedmore, *Meryon and Meryon's Paris*, p. 59.

53 The Same.

Another impression, on the same thin, wiry, old Dutch paper. This impression is not quite so richly printed as the preceding, but is wonderfully delicate and atmospheric.

54 The Same.

Impression in *bistre* ink, on old Whatman paper.

55 Rue des Chantres. (Wedmore No. 25)

First state of two, before the title.

56 Ministère de la Marine. (Wedmore No. 26)

The second state of four. From the collection of Maxime Lalanne.

The commission to etch this plate was secured for Meryon by his friend Monsieur Jules Niel of the Ministère de l'Intérieur, who hoped, no doubt, it would lead to further work and might relieve much of Meryon's distress. This chance was lost, however, through Meryon's insisting upon putting all sorts of wild, imaginary creatures in the sky.

57 Le Pont au Change vers 1784. (Wedmore No. 28)

Impression of the second state, on *papier verdâtre*.

"The *Pont au Change*—both the large original etching and the exquisite interpretation of Nicolle's old design . . . will show us that no one like Meryon has depicted running water. . . ."

Frederick Wedmore, *Meryon and Meryon's Paris*, p. 29.

58 The Same.

Impression in *bistre* ink on warm-toned Whatman paper.

59 Le Pont Neuf et La Samaritaine. (Wedmore No. 29)

The only state.

Printed in *bistre* on warm-toned Whatman paper.

"Also outside the published Set of 'Paris' are two little etchings which are particularly noteworthy and which, by reason of the extreme, even astounding delicacy of some of their work, it is, I think, well to secure in the early state of Trial Proof, when one can get the chance. These are the *Pont au Change vers 1784* and *Le Pont Neuf*."

Wedmore, *Fine Prints*.

60 Partie de la Cité de Paris, vers la Fin du XVII<sup>me</sup> Siècle.

(Wedmore No. 31)

Second state of three. On white *vergé* paper.

## PLATES NOT BELONGING TO THE PARIS SERIES.

61 Entrée du Couvent des Capucins Français à Athènes.

(Wedmore No. 32)

The second state.

A beautiful study of the Choragic Monument of Lysicrates.

62 Ancienne Habitation à Bourges.

(Wedmore No. 34)

The second state.

63 La Rue des Toiles, à Bourges.

(Wedmore No. 35)

Fourth state of five.

64 Salle des Pas Perdus.

(Wedmore No. 76)

After Androuet Ducerceau.

Third state after plate was reduced in size. Impression dedicated to Eugène Bléry. The inscription, which in the earlier state of the plate was etched in the lower margin, is carefully copied out in pencil. The handwriting bears a great resemblance to Meryon's own, and this fact, together with the dedication to Bléry, makes it seem probable that the inscription was copied out by Meryon himself.

65 San Francisco.

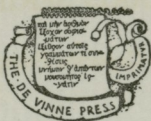
(Wedmore No. 80)

Early trial proof before the title and before the sky.

66 The Same.

The title and the sky have been added and there is much further work throughout the plate.









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